

# LEGENDS OF ST. FRANCIS.

**How St. Francis Showed to Brother Leone, as They Went by the Way, What Are the Things in Which Consists Perfect Joy.**

As St. Francis went once on a time from Perugia to St. Mary of the Angels, with Brother Leone, in the winter, they suffered greatly from the severity of the cold, and St. Francis called to Brother Leone, who was going on a little in advance: "O Brother Leone, although the Friars Minor in these parts give a great example of sanctity and good edification, write it down and note it well, that this is not perfect joy." And having gone a little further, he called to him the second time: "O Brother Leone, even though the Friars Minor should give sight to the blind, and loose the limbs of the paralyzed, and though they should cast out devils, and give hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and the power of walking to the lame, and although—which is a greater thing than these—they should raise to life those who had been dead four days, write that in all this, there is not perfect joy."

And going on a little while, he cried aloud: "O Brother Leone, if the Friars Minor knew all languages, and all the sciences, and all the Scriptures, and if they could prophesy, and reveal, not only things in the future, but the secrets of consciences, and of men's souls, write that in all this, there is not perfect joy." Going still a little further, St. Francis called aloud again: "O Brother Leone, thou little sheep of God, even though the Friars Minor spoke with the tongues of angels, and knew the courses of the stars, and the virtues of herbs, and though to them were revealed all the treasures of the earth, and that they knew the virtues of birds and of fishes, and of all animals, and of men, of trees also, and of stones, and roots and waters, write that not in this is perfect joy."

And going yet a little while on the way, St. Francis called aloud: "O Brother Leone, even though the Friars Minor should preach so well that they should convert all the infidels to the Faith of Christ, write that herein is not perfect joy." And

as he spoke in this manner during two good miles, Brother Leone in great astonishment asked of him, and said: "Father, I pray thee, for God's sake, tell me wherein is perfect joy." And St. Francis replied to him: "When we shall have come to St. Mary of the Angels, soaked as we are with the rain, and frozen with the cold, encrusted with mud, and afflicted with hunger, and shall knock at the door, if the porter should come, and ask angrily, 'Who are you?' and we replying, 'We are two of your Brethren,' he should say, 'You speak falsely; you are two good-for-nothings, who go about the world stealing alms from the poor; go your way,' and if he would not open the door to us, but left us without, exposed till night to the snow, and the wind, and the torrents of rain, in cold and hunger; then, if we should bear so much abuse and cruelty, and such a dismissal patiently, without disturbance, and without murmuring at him, and should think humbly and charitably that this porter knew us truly, and that God would have him speak against us, O Brother Leone, write that this would be perfect joy."

"And if we should continue to knock, and he should come out in a rage, and should drive us away as importunate villains, with rudeness and with buffetings, saying: 'Depart from this house, vile thieves; go to the poor-house, for you shall neither eat nor be lodged here,' if we should sustain this with patience, and with joy, and with love, O Brother Leone, write that this would be perfect joy. And if constrained by hunger, and the cold, and the night, we should knock yet again, and beg him with many tears, for the love of God, that he would open to us and let us in, and he should say still more angrily: 'These are importunate rascals, I will pay them well for this, as they deserve,' and should come out furiously with a knotted stick, and seize hold of us by our hoods, and throw us to the earth, and roll us in the snow, and beat us all over our bodies, if we should bear all these things patiently and with joy, think-

ing on the pains of the Blessed Christ, as that which we ought to bear for His love:—O Brother Leone, write, that it is in this that there is perfect joy. Finally, hear the conclusion, Brother Leone: above all the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which Christ has given to His friends, is that of conquering one's self, and suffering willingly, for the love of Christ, all pain, ill-usage, and opprobrium, and calamity; because, of all the other gifts of God, we can glory in none, seeing they are not ours, but God's; as said the Apostle: What hast thou that thou hast not received of God? And if thou hast received it of God, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst it of thyself? But in the cross of tribulation, and affliction, we may glory, for these are ours, and therefore, says the Apostle, I will not glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**How Brother Masseo Mockingly Said to St. Francis that all the World Went After Him: and St. Francis Replied that this was for the Confusion of the World, and for the Glory of God.**

St. Francis was staying once on a time in the convent of the Portiuncula with Brother Masseo of Marignano, a man of great sanctity, discernment, and grace in speaking of the things of God, for which reason St. Francis loved him much; and one day, as St. Francis was returning from his prayers in the wood, at the entrance to the wood, Brother Masseo met him, and wishing to test how humble he was, asked in a mocking manner, saying: "Why after thee? why after thee? why after thee?" St. Francis replied: "What is it thou wouldst say?" And Brother Masseo answered: "Say, why is it that all the world comes after thee, and everybody desires to see thee, and to hear thee, and to obey thee? Thou art not a man either comely of person, or of noble birth, or of great science. Whence then comes it that all the world runs after thee?"

Hearing this, St. Francis, filled with joy in his spirit, raised his face towards heaven and remained for a great while with his mind lifted up to God; then, returning to himself, he knelt down, and gave praise and thanks to God; and then, with great fervor of spirit, turning to Brother Masseo, he said: "Wouldst know why after me? wouldst know why after me? why all the world runs after me? This

comes to me, because the eyes of the Most High God, which behold in all places both the evil and the good, even those most holy eyes have not seen amongst sinners one more vile, nor more insufficient, nor a greater sinner than I, and therefore to do that wonderful work which He intends to do, He has not found on the earth a viler creature than I; and for this cause He has elected me to confound the nobility, and the grandeur, and the strength, and beauty, and wisdom of the world; that all men may know that all virtue and all goodness are of Him, and not of the creature; and that none should glory in His presence; but that he who glories should glory in the Lord, to Whom is all honor and glory in eternity."

Then Brother Masseo, at this humble and fervent reply, feared within himself, and knew certainly that St. Francis was grounded in humility.

**How St. Francis and Brother Masseo Deposited Some Bread, Which They Had Begged, on a Stone, Beside a Fountain; and St. Francis Greatly Praised Poverty; and Afterwards Prayed God and St. Peter and St. Paul to Make Them Lovers of Holy Poverty; and How St. Peter and St. Paul Appeared to Him.**

The wonderful servant and follower of Christ, St. Francis, in order to conform himself perfectly in all things to Christ—Who, as it is said in the Gospel, sent out His disciples, two and two, to all the cities and places whither He was intending to go—had, after the example of Christ, chosen twelve companions, and sent them forth into the world to preach, two and two. And in order to give them an example of true obedience, he was the first to set forth, after the example of Christ, Who began to act before He taught.

Now, having assigned to the others another part of the world, he himself, with Brother Masseo for companion, took the way which leads towards the land of France. And coming one day to a certain town, and being very hungry, they went, according to the Rule, to beg bread for the love of God; St. Francis going down one street and Brother Masseo down another. But because St. Francis was a man of mean appearance, and small of stature, and accounted a vile beggar by those who knew him not, he received nothing but a few mouthful and crumbs of dry bread; whilst Brother Masseo, being tall



and comely in person, had good pieces, and large, and many, given to him, and entire loves.

When they had begged enough, they went together to a place outside the town, where there was a fair fountain, that they might eat; and beside which was also a broad and convenient stone, on which each placed all the alms which he had begged. And St. Francis, seeing that the pieces of bread which Brother Masseo had were larger and better than his own, had great joy, and spoke thus: "O Brother Masseo, we are not worthy of so great treasure." And as he repeated these words several times, Brother Masseo answered him: "Father, how can this be called treasure, when we are in such poverty, and lack the things of which we have need; we, who have neither cloth, nor knives, nor plates, nor porringer, nor house, nor table, nor man servant, nor maid servant?"

Then said St. Francis: "And this is what I call a great treasure, that there is nothing here provided by human industry, but everything is provided by Divine Providence, as we may see manifestly in this bread which we have begged, in this stone which serves so beautifully for our table, and in this so clear fountain; and therefore I desire that we should pray to God, that He would cause holy Poverty, which is a thing so noble that God Himself was made subject to it, to be loved by us with our whole heart." And when he had said these words, and they had made their prayer, and partaken for bodily refreshment of the pieces of bread, and drunk of the water, they arose and went on their way to France. And they having come to a church, St. Francis said to his companion: "Let us go into this church and pray."

And entering, St. Francis placed himself behind the altar, and betook himself to prayer. And as he prayed, he received from the Divine visitation such excessive fervor, which so vehemently inflamed his soul with the love of holy Poverty, that by the increased color of his face, and the unaccustomed opening of his lips, it seemed as though he was breathing out flames of love. And coming thus, all enflamed, to his companion, he said to him: "Ah! Ah! Ah! Brother Masseo, yield thyself to me." And this he said three times, and the third time, he lifted Brother Masseo by his

breath into the air, and threw him from him to the distance of a long spear, which put Brother Masseo into the greatest astonishment. And afterwards, relating the matter to his companions, he said that during the time he was raised up and thrown forth by the breath which proceeded from St. Francis, he tasted such sweetness in his soul, and such consolation of the Holy Spirit, that in all his life he had never felt the like.

And this done, St. Francis said to him: "My Brother, let us go to St. Peter and St. Paul, and pray them to teach us, and to give us to possess, the immeasurable treasure of holy Poverty, inasmuch as it is a treasure so exalted, and so Divine, that we are not worthy to possess it in our vile bodies, seeing that this is that celestial virtue by which all earthly and transitory things are trodden under foot, and all impediments are lifted away from the soul, so that she can freely unite herself to the Eternal God. And this is the virtue which makes the soul, while still retained on earth, converse with the angels in Heaven, and this it is which accompanied Christ to His Cross, with Christ was buried, with Christ was raised up, with Christ ascended into heaven, which, being given in this life to the souls who are enamored of it, facilitates their flight to heaven, seeing that it guards the arms of true humility and charity. And therefore let us pray the most holy Apostles of Christ, who were perfect lovers of this pearl of the Gospel of Christ, that they will beg for us this grace from our Lord Jesus Christ, that, by His most holy mercy, He would grant us the merit to be true lovers, observers, and humble disciples of this most precious, most lovable, evangelical Poverty."

And thus speaking, they arrived in Rome, and entered the church of St. Peter; and St. Francis placed himself in prayer in a corner of the church, and Brother Masseo in another. And as St. Francis prayed for a long time, with many tears, and great devotion, the most holy Apostles Peter and Paul appeared to him in great splendor, and said: "Because thou hast asked and desired to observe that which Christ and the holy Apostles observed, the Lord Jesus Christ has sent us to thee, to announce that thy prayer is heard, and it is granted of God to thee and thy followers to possess perfectly the

treasure of most holy Poverty. And further, in His name, we say to thee that whosoever, after thy example, shall follow perfectly after this desire, he shall be secure of the blessedness of life eternal; and thou and all thy followers shall be blessed of God."

And having said these words, they vanished, leaving St. Francis full of consolation, who, rising from his prayer, returned to his companion, and asked him if God had revealed nothing to him, and he answered him, nothing. Then St. Francis told him how the holy Apostles had appeared to him, and what they had revealed to him. At which both of them, filled with joy, determined to return by the valley of Spoleto, and to abandon the journey into France.

**How St. Francis Received the Counsel of St. Clare, and of the Holy Brother Silvestro, that He Should Preach for the Conversion of Many People; and How He Founded the Third Order, and Preached to the Birds, and Made the Swallows Keep Quiet.**

The humble servant of Christ, St. Francis, a short time after his conversion, having already gathered many companions and received them into the Order, entered into great consideration, and great doubt what he should do: whether he should give himself solely to prayer, or whether he should sometimes preach: and he desired much to know the will of God in this matter. And because the holy humility that was in him suffered him not to presume on himself, nor on his own prayers, he thought to discover the Divine will through the prayers of others: and he called Brother Masseo, and spoke thus: "Go to Sister Clare, and tell her from me to pray fervently to God, she and some of her most spiritual daughters, that it may please Him to shew which is the best, whether I should give myself to preaching, or solely to prayer. And then go to Brother Silvestro, and say the same to him."

The same Brother Silvestro it was, who when he was in the secular state, had seen a cross of gold proceeding from the mouth of St. Francis, which went lengthwise as far as heaven, and the arms of which extended to the extremities of the world; and the same Brother Silvestro was also of so great devotion and sanctity that many times he spoke

with God, and whatsoever he asked of God was granted, and for this cause St. Francis had a great devotion towards him. Brother Masseo therefore departed, and according to the command of St. Francis, made his embassy first to St. Clare, and afterwards to Brother Silvestro, who, as soon as he knew wherefore he had come, immediately betook himself to prayer, and when he had received the Divine answer, he turned to Brother Masseo and spoke thus: "This is what God says: thou shalt tell Brother Francis that God has not called him to this state solely for himself, but that he may gain much fruit in the souls of others, and that many through him may be saved."

Having received this answer, Brother Masseo returned to St. Clare, to know what she had obtained of God; and she replied that she and her companions had received from God the same answer as Brother Silvestro. With this reply Brother Masseo returned to St. Francis; and St. Francis received him with the greatest charity, washed his feet, and prepared his repast; and after he had eaten, St. Francis called him into the wood; and kneeling before him, he let down his hood, and stretching out his arms in the form of a Cross, he asked: "What does my Lord Jesus Christ command that I should do?" Brother Masseo answered: "As to Brother Silvestro, so to Sister Clare, with her Sisters, has Christ answered and revealed: that His will is that thou shouldst go into the world to preach, because He has not elected for thyself alone, but also for the salvation of others."

Then St. Francis, having heard this reply and knowing by this, what was the will of Jesus Christ, arose, with great fervor, and said: "Let us go, in the name of God;" and he took for his companions Brother Masseo and Brother Agnolo, both holy men.

And going by the prompting of the Holy Ghost, without taking thought of the way or the road, he came to a village called Savurniano. And St. Francis began to preach, and first of all he commanded the swallows who were singing that they should keep silence, until he had done preaching; and the swallows obeyed him, and he preached with so much fervor, that all the men and women in that



village were minded to go forth and abandon the village; but St. Francis suffered them not, and said to them: "Do not be in haste, and do not go hence, and I will order that which you must do for the salvation of your souls;" and then he thought of his Third Order, for the salvation of the whole world.

And he left them much comforted, and well disposed to penance; and he departed thence, and went by Cannai, and Bevagno. And passing along, in fervor of soul, he lifted up his eyes and saw many trees standing by the way, and filled with a countless multitude of little birds; at which St. Francis wondered, and said to his companions: "Wait a little for me in the road, and I will go and preach to my sisters the birds." And he entered into the field, and began to preach to the birds that were on the ground.

And suddenly those that were in the trees came around him, and together they all remained silent, so long as it pleased St. Francis to speak; and even after he had finished they would not depart until he had given them his blessing. And, according as Brother Masseo afterwards related to Brother James of Masso, St. Francis went among them and touched them with his cloak, and none of them moved.

The substance of the sermon was this: "My little sisters, the birds, you are much beholden to God your Creator, and in all places you ought to praise Him, because He has given you liberty to fly about in all places, and has given you double and triple raiment. Know also, that He preserved your race in the ark of Noe that your species might not perish. And again, you are beholden to Him for the element of air, which He has appointed for you; and for this also, that you neither sow nor reap, but God feeds you, and gives you the brooks and fountains for your drink, the mountains and valleys also for your refuge, and the tall trees wherein to make your nests. And since you know neither how to sew nor to spin, God clothes you, you and your young ones. Wherefore your Creator loves you much, since He has bestowed on you so many benefits. And therefore beware, my little sisters, of the sin of ingratitude, and study always to please God."

As St. Francis spoke thus to them, all the multitude of these birds opened their beaks, and stretched out their necks; and opening their wings, and reverently bowing their heads to the earth, by their acts and by their songs they shewed that the words of the holy Father gave them the greatest delight. And St. Francis rejoiced, and was glad with them, and marvelled much at such a multitude of birds, and their beautiful variety, and their attention and familiarity; for all which he devoutly praised their Creator in them.

Finally, having finished his sermon, St. Francis made the sign of the Cross over them, and gave them leave to depart; and thereupon all those birds arose in the air, with wonderful singing; and after the fashion of the sign of the Cross which St. Francis had made over them, they divided themselves into four parts; and one part flew towards the East, and another to the West, another to the South, and another to the North, and all departing went their way singing wonderful songs; signifying by this, that as St. Francis, standard-bearer of the Cross of Christ, had preached to them, and made on them the sign of the Cross, after which they had divided themselves, going to the four parts of the world; so the preaching of the Cross of Christ, renewed by St. Francis, should be carried by him and by his Brothers to the whole world; and that these Brothers, after the fashion of the birds, should possess nothing of their own in this world, but commit their lives solely to the Providence of God.

**How a Little Boy-Brother, Whilst St. Francis Was Praying in the Night, Saw Christ, and the Virgin Mother, and Many Other Saints Talking to Him.**

A certain little boy, most pure and innocent, was received into the Order during the lifetime of St. Francis, and it was in a little place where the Brothers, of necessity, slept on truckle beds. Now once on a time, St. Francis came to this place, and in the evening, after Compline, he lay down to sleep, that he might be able to rise in the night and pray, when the other Brothers were asleep, according to his custom. Then the little boy set his heart on carefully watching the ways of St. Francis, that he might know his sanctity, and especially that he might know what he did when

he got up in the night. And in order that he might not sleep too soundly, the boy, when he lay down by the side of St. Francis, tied his cord to the cord of St. Francis, that he might feel when he got up; and of this St. Francis perceived nothing.

But in the night, after his first sleep, when all the other Brothers slept, St. Francis arose and found his cord fastened to something, and he softly untied it, so that the boy did not feel anything, and went into the wood which was close to the house, and entering a little cell which was there, betook himself to prayer. After a while the boy awoke, and finding that the cord had been unfastened, and that St. Francis had arisen and gone away, he arose also, and went to look for him: and finding the door open, which led to the wood, he thought that St. Francis might have gone there; and entered the wood himself. And nearing the cell where St. Francis was praying, he began to hear much speaking; and approaching nearer to see, and to make out what it was that he heard, he beheld a wonderful light, which surrounded St. Francis; and in it he saw Christ, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St. John the Baptist, and St. John the Evangelist, and an immense multitude of angels, who were speaking with St. Francis. Seeing and hearing all this, the boy fell to the earth as one dead.

Then, the mysterious vision being ended, St. Francis, returning to the house, stumbled with his foot against the boy, who lay as though dead; and in compassion he lifted him up and carried him in his arms, as a good shepherd does with his lambs. And afterwards learning from the boy how he had seen this vision, he commanded him not to tell it to any one, as long as he should be alive. And the boy grew in great grace with God, and devotion to St. Francis, and became a celebrated man in the Order; and after the death of St. Francis, he revealed to the Brothers the vision which he had seen.

**Of the Marvellous Chapter Which St. Francis Held at St. Mary of the Angels, at Which Were Present More Than Five Thousand Brothers.**

The faithful servant of Christ, Francis, was once holding a general Chapter at St. Mary of the Angels, at which Chapter more than five thousand Brothers assembled; and there came also St. Dominic, head and founder of the Order of Friars

Preachers, who was then on his way from Bologna to Rome. And hearing of the assembling of the Chapter, which St. Francis was holding in the plain of St. Mary of the Angels, he went to see it, with seven Brothers of his Order. There was also at the said Chapter a Cardinal most devoted to St. Francis, who had prophesied to him that he should be Pope, as it afterwards came to pass. This Cardinal had come expressly from Perugia, where the Court was to Assisi; and he came every day to see St. Francis and his Brothers, and sometimes sang the Mass, and sometimes preached to the Brothers in Chapter. The said Cardinal found the greatest delight and devotion whenever he came to visit this holy company.

And coming to the little plain of St. Mary of the Angels, he saw the Brothers grouped in companies, here forty, there a hundred, there eighty together, all occupied in speaking of the things of God, in prayer, in tears, and in exercises of charity; and this with such quietness, and such modesty, that there was not heard one sound, or any disturbance. And marvelling at such a multitude, so well ordered, with tears, and with great devotion, he said: "Truly this is the camp, and the army of the knights of God." There was not to be heard in all this multitude an idle word, or unseemly jest; but wherever a company of Brothers assembled together, they either prayed, or said the Office, or wept over their own sins and those of their benefactors, or spoke of the things which are for the salvation of souls.

The tents in this encampment were of willow-trellis and of rush matting, and divided into groups consisting of the Brothers of the various Provinces; and hence this Chapter was called, "the Chapter of the Trellises," or, "of the Rush-mats." Their bed was on the bare ground, with a little straw for those who had it; and for pillows, they had stones or logs of wood. For which cause, so great devotion spread from them to those who heard or saw them, and so great was the fame of their sanctity, that from the Court of the Pope, which was then at Perugia, and from the other districts of the valley of Spoleto, there came many counts, barons and cavaliers, and other gentlemen of rank, and many parish priests, cardinals, bishops and abbots, and



many other clerics, to see this so great, and holy, and humble congregation, like which the world had never another containing so many holy men together.

And chiefly they came to see the most holy head and Father of this holy people, who had robbed from the world so noble a prey, and assembled together so devout and fair a flock to follow in the steps of the true Shepherd Jesus Christ. The General Chapter being therefore assembled, the holy Father and General Minister of all, St. Francis, with fervor of spirit, expounded the word of God; and preached to them, with a loud voice, that which the Holy Spirit made him speak; and for the theme of his sermon, he proposed to them these words: "My sons, great are the things promised to us from God: yea, too, great things are promised to us if we observe that which we have promised to Him. Brief are the delights of this world; the pain which follows after them is perpetual; little are the pains of this life, but the glory of the other life is infinite."

And on these words, he preached with the greatest devotion, comforting the Brothers, and persuading them to obey and reverence the holy Mother Church, and to have fraternal charity; to praise God for all men, and to have patience in the adversities of this world, and temperance in prosperity, and to observe modesty, and angelic chastity, and to have peace and concord with God, and with men, and with their own conscience, and to love and observe holy poverty. And after this, he said: "I command all you who are here assembled, by virtue of obedience, that none of you have care or solicitude for anything to eat, or anything necessary for the body; attend only to praying and praising God, and all solicitude for your body leave to Him, inasmuch as He has special care for you."

And all received this command with glad hearts and with joyful countenances; and the sermon of St. Francis being ended, they prostrated themselves in prayer. At which St. Dominic, who was present during all these things, marveled greatly at the commandment of St. Francis, and considered it indiscreet, not being able to think how so great a multitude should be able to govern itself, without any care or solicitude for the things necessary to

the body. But the Chief Shepherd, Christ the Blessed, willing to show how He has care for His sheep, and singular love for His poor, immediately inspired the people of Perugia, of Spoleto, of Fuglino, of Spello and Assisi, and the other surrounding districts, so that they carried what was needed to eat and to drink to this holy congregation.

And behold there come speedily, from the neighboring districts, men with mules, horses and carts, laden with bread and with wine, with beans, and with cheese, and with other good things to eat, such as the poor of Christ had need of. Besides this, they brought napkins, earthen pots, bowls, drinking-cups, and other vessels necessary for so great a multitude; and he considered himself blessed who could bring the most, or serve the most diligently, so that even the knights, and barons, and other gentlemen who had come to see the sight, were the first, with great humility and devotion, to serve them.

For which cause, St. Dominic, seeing these things, and knowing of a surety that Divine Providence worked for them, humbly acknowledged that he had wrongfully judged that St. Francis had given an indiscreet commandment, and forthwith went, and kneeling down, humbly confessed his fault; and added: "Truly God has special care of these holy poor little ones, and I knew it not; and from this hour, I promise, first of all, to observe holy, evangelical Poverty; and I anathematize, on the part of God, all the Brothers of my Order, who shall presume to have property."

Thus was St. Dominic much edified by the faith of most holy Francis, and the obedience and poverty of so great and well-ordered a company, and by the Providence of God, and the copious abundance of all these good things.

**Of the Most Holy Miracle Which St. Francis Performed When He Converted the Fierce Wolf of Gubbio.**

At the time when St. Francis dwelt in the city of Gubbio, there appeared in the neighborhood an enormous wolf, terrible and ferocious, which devoured not only animals, but even men also, inasmuch that all the citizens stood in great terror, because many times he had approached the city, and all carried arms when they went out of the

city, as though they were going to battle; yet with all this if any one met him alone he could not defend himself against him. And for fear of this wolf it had come to such a pass that no one had the courage to go out of the city.

Therefore, St. Francis had compassion on the men of the place, and desired to go out to this wolf, although all the citizens together counseled him not to do so: and making the sign of the most holy Cross, he went out into the fields, he and his companions, all his confidence resting in God. And the others, hesitating to go any further, St. Francis took his way to the place where the wolf was. And behold! seeing the many citizens, who had come out to witness the miracle, the wolf made at St. Francis with open mouth. And when he had come near, St. Francis made on him the sign of the most holy Cross, and called him to him, saying: "Come along, Brother Wolf, I command thee on the part of Christ, that thou do no harm, neither to me, nor to any one."

And O wonder! immediately that St. Francis had made the holy Sign, the terrible wolf shut his mouth, and ceased to run, and did as he was commanded, coming gently as a lamb, and lay down to rest at the feet of St. Francis. Then St. Francis spoke to him thus: "Brother Wolf, thou hast done much damage in these parts, and many evil deeds, ravaging, and killing the creatures of God, without His permission; and not only killing and devouring the cattle, but having the hardihood to destroy men made in the image of God, for which cause thou dost deserve to be hung upon the gallows like a convict, as being a thief and the worst of murderers; and all the people cry out and murmur because of thee, and the whole neighborhood is hostile to thee. But, Brother Wolf, I would make peace between them and thee, so that thou offend no more, and they shall pardon thee all past offences, and neither men nor dogs shall persecute thee more."

At these words, the wolf, by the motions of his body, and his tail, and his eyes, and by inclining his head, showed that he accepted what St. Francis had said, and was ready to observe it. Then St. Francis said again. "Brother Wolf, since it pleases thee to make and to keep this peace, I promise thee

that I shall have thy food given to thee continually by the men of this place, as long as thou shalt live, so that thou shalt suffer no more hunger, for I know well that it is hunger which made thee do all this evil. But since I have obtained for thee this grace, I desire, Brother Wolf, that thou promise me never more to harm man or beast; dost thou promise me this?" And the wolf by inclining his head made evident signs that he promised.

And St. Francis said to him: "Brother Wolf, I would have thee pledge me thy faith that thou wilt keep this promise, without which I cannot well trust thee." And St. Francis, holding out his hand to receive his faith, the wolf immediately lifted up his right paw and gently placed it in the hand of St. Francis, thus giving him such pledge of faith as he was able. Then St. Francis said: "Brother Wolf, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ that thou come now with me, without doubting of anything; and let us go and confirm this peace in the name of God."

And the wolf obediently went with him like a mild and gentle lamb; which the citizens saw, and marvelled greatly. And immediately the news spread over the whole city, and all the people, men and women, great and small, young and old, thronged to the Piazza to see the wolf with St. Francis. And all the people being gathered together, St. Francis got up to preach, telling them among other things how it was on account of sin that God permitted such calamities, and also pestilences. Much more terrible, he said "are the flames of hell which the damned will have to endure eternally than the fangs of the wolf, which cannot destroy more than the body. How much more then are the jaws of hell to be feared, when we see so many held in terror by the jaws of a little animal! Turn therefore, beloved, to God, and do worthy penance for your sins, and God will deliver you now from the fires of hell."

And the sermon ended, St. Francis said: "Listen, my brethren: Brother Wolf, who is here before you, has promised, and has pledged me his faith, to make peace with you, and never to offend again in anything; and you will promise to give him every day that which is necessary; and I make myself surety for him, that he will faithfully ob-



serve the treaty of peace." Then all the people promised with one voice to feed him continually. And St. Francis, before them all, said to the wolf: "And thou, Brother Wolf, dost thou promise to observe and to keep the treaty of peace that thou wilt not offend either man or beast, or any creature?"

And the wolf knelt down and inclined his head, and by gentle movements of his body, and his tail, and his ears, showed as well as he could that he was willing to keep all he had promised them. Then said St. Francis: "Brother Wolf, I desire that as thou hast pledged me thy faith to this promise outside the gates, thou wilt pledge me thy faith again before all the people, and not deceive me in the promise and guarantee which I have given for thee." Then the wolf lifting up his right paw, placed it in the hand of St. Francis. Whilst this and the rest that has been told above was taking place, there was such joy and admiration amongst all the people, both through devotion to the Saint, and through the novelty of the miracle, and also on account of the peace made with the wolf, that all began to cry to heaven praising and blessing God for sending to them St. Francis, who by his merits had delivered them from the jaws of the cruel beast.

And after this, the said wolf lived two years in Gubbio; and went sociably into the houses, going from door to door, without doing harm to any one, or any one doing harm to him, and was continually entertained by the people. And thus, as he went through fields and lanes, never did any dog bark at him. Finally, after two years, Brother Wolf died of old age; at which the citizens grieved much; for whilst he went so gently about the town, they remembered the virtue and sanctity of St. Francis.

#### How St. Francis Made the Wild Turtle-Dove Tame.

A certain youth had caught one day a great number of turtle-doves; and as he was taking them to market he met St. Francis, who, having a singular compassion for these gentle creatures, looked at the doves with eyes of pity, and said to the youth: "O good youth, I pray thee give me these gentle birds, to which, in the holy Scriptures, chaste and humble and faithful souls are compared; and

do not let them fall into the hands of cruel men who would kill them."

And immediately the young man, being inspired by God, gave them all to St. Francis; and he received them into his bosom and said to them tenderly: "O my little sisters, simple, innocent and chaste doves, why have you let yourselves be snared? See I will snatch you from death and make nests for you, wherein you may increase and multiply according to the commandment of our Creator." And St. Francis went and made nests for them all; and they took to their nests, and began to lay eggs, and hatched them without fear before the eyes of the Brothers; and they were as tame and familiar with St. Francis and all the other Brothers as if they had been domestic fowls always accustomed to be fed by them; and they would not depart until St. Francis with his blessing gave them leave to go.

And to the young man who had given them to him, St. Francis said: "Little son, thou wilt yet be a Brother in this Order, and wilt serve Jesus Christ nobly." And so it came to pass: for the said youth became a Brother and lived in the Order in great sanctity.

#### Of the Beautiful Sermon Preached in Assisi by St. Francis and Brother Ruffino.

Brother Ruffino, by continued contemplation, was so absorbed in God, that he became almost insensible and speechless, and moreover had neither grace, nor courage, nor eloquence in preaching; nevertheless, St. Francis commanded him one day to go to Assisi and preach to the people that which God inspired him to say. To which Brother Ruffino replied: "Reverend Father, I pray you to excuse me, and send me not, because, as thou knowest, I have not the grace of preaching, but am simple and stupid." And St. Francis said: "Since thou hast not obeyed promptly, I command thee by holy obedience, that thou go, in thy breeches only, to Assisi, and enter into a church, and preach to the people."

At this command, Brother Ruffino stripped off his habit, and went to Assisi, and entered a church, and having made his reverence to the altar, he ascended the pulpit and began to preach; at which the children and men began to laugh, and said:

"Now see, these men do so much penance, that they become fools and beside themselves." In the meantime, St. Francis, thinking over the prompt obedience of Brother Ruffino, who was one of the highest gentlemen of Assisi, and of the hard command which he had given him, began to reproach himself, saying: "Whence hast thou so great presumption, son of Peter Bernardoni, thou sorry wight, to command Brother Ruffino, who is one of the highest gentlemen of Assisi, to go and preach to the people, as if he were a madman? By God's grace, thou shalt prove in thyself that which thou hast commanded to others."

And immediately, in fervor of spirit, he stripped himself in like manner, and went his way to Assisi, taking with him Brother Leo, to carry his habit and that of Brother Ruffino. And the townsmen of Assisi seeing him in the same plight, derided him, declaring him and Brother Ruffino both mad, through excess of penance. And St. Francis entered the church, where Brother Ruffino was preaching in these words: "O most dearly beloved, fly the world and forsake sin; restore that which belongs to others, if you would escape hell; keep the commandments of God, by loving God and your neighbor, if you wish to go to heaven; do penance, if you would possess the kingdom of heaven."

Then St. Francis ascended the pulpit, and began to preach so wonderously of the contempt of the world, of holy penance, of voluntary poverty, and of the desire of the heavenly kingdom, and of the nakedness and opprobrium of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all they that were present at the sermon, both men and women, a great multitude, began to weep bitterly, with great devotion and compunction of heart; and not only in the church, but through all Assisi that day, there was such weeping for the Passion of Christ, that the like was never known.

And the people being thus edified and consoled by this act of St. Francis and Brother Ruffino, St. Francis re-clothed Brother Ruffino and himself, and thus re-habited they returned to the convent of the Portiuncula, praising and glorifying God, who had given them grace to overcome themselves by the contempt of themselves, and to edify the

little sheep of Christ by a good example, and to show how much the world is to be despised. And in that day, the devotion of the people increased so greatly towards them, that he reputed himself blessed who could touch the hem of their habit.

**How St. Clare, by Command of the Pope, Blessed the Loaves Which Were on the Table; and How There Appeared on Each Loaf the Sign of the Holy Cross.**

St. Clare, most devoted disciple of the Cross of Christ, and noble plant of St. Francis, was of such sanctity that not only Bishops and Cardinals, but the Pope himself desired, with great affection, to see her, to hear her, and oftentimes visited her in person. Amongst other times, once, when the Holy Father went to her Convent to hear her speak of heavenly and divine things, whilst they were together, holding divers discourses, St. Clare meanwhile had the tables prepared, and the loaves placed on them in order that the Holy Father might bless them.

The spiritual discourse being ended she inclined herself with great reverence, prayed him to be pleased to bless the loaves before their repast. The Holy Father answered: "Sister Clare, most true and faithful one, I desire that you bless these loves, and make on them the sign of the most holy Cross, to which thou hast entirely given thyself." St. Clare replied: "Most Holy Father, pardon me, who would be worthy of too great rebuke, if before the Vicar of Christ I, who am a worthless woman, should presume to give this blessing." And the Pope answered: "In order that this may not be imputed to presumption, but to the merit of obedience, I command thee by holy obedience that thou make on these loves the sign of the most holy Cross, and bless them in the name of God."

Then St. Clare, like a true daughter of obedience, most devoutly blessed these loves with the sign of the most holy Cross. Wonderful to relate! immediately there appeared on all these loves the sign of the Cross, most beautifully engraved; then of these loves, some were eaten and some miraculously preserved. And the Holy Father, having seen the miracle, took of the loves with him, and departed, leaving St. Clare with his blessing.



**Of the Miracle Which God Worked, When St. Anthony, Being at Rimini, Preached to the Fishes of the Sea.**

Christ the Blessed, wishing to show the great sanctity of His most faithful servant, St. Anthony, and how devoutly his preaching and holy doctrine were to be listened to, on one occasion among others reproved the folly of the faithless heretics by means of animals without reason; that is to say, by the fishes, even as in former days in the Old Testament by the mouth of an ass he had reproved the ignorance of Balaam.

For once on a time, St. Anthony being at Rimini, where were a great multitude of heretics, desiring to bring them to the light of the true Faith and the way of virtue, he preached for many days, disputing on the Faith of Christ, and on the holy Scriptures; but they, not only not consenting to his holy words, but, as those who are obstinate and hardened, refusing even to listen, St. Anthony one day, by Divine inspiration, went his way to the bank of the stream, where it flowed into the sea; and standing thus, by the shore, between the river and the sea, he began to speak, and, as it were, preach to the fishes, in the Name of God, saying; "Hear the word of God, ye fishes of the sea and the stream, since the unbelieving heretics scorn to hear it."

And as soon as he had thus spoken, immediately there came to him, swimming towards the shore, so great a multitude of fishes, big, little and middle-sized, as were never seen before in the sea and in that river; and all of them held their heads up above the water, and all remained attentive before the face of St. Anthony, all of them docile, and in the greatest order and tranquillity; so that in the forefront, close to the shore, came all the smallest fishes, and after them the middle-sized fishes, and behind these again, where the water was deeper, the great fishes.

All the fishes being now, therefore, thus placed and in order, St. Anthony began to preach solemnly; and thus he said: "My brothers the fishes, much are you indebted and bound to return thanks to our Creator, Who has given you so noble an element for your habitation, so that as it pleases you, you can have sweet waters, or salt, and wherein is given you many a place of refuge from the tem-

pests; and also this same clear and transparent element, and the food by which you live. God, your gentle and beneficent Creator, when He made you, gave you command to grow and multiply, and bestowed on you His blessing; after which came the Deluge, when all the other animals universally perished, you only being preserved by God from all hurt. Besides all this, He has granted to you fins, that you may wander at pleasure wheresoever you will. To you it was given, by the commandment of God, to preserve Jonas the prophet, and on the third day to cast him on dry land, safe and well. You it was who offered the tax-money to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was so poor that He had not wherewith to pay. You were the food of the Eternal King, Jesus Christ, immediately before the Resurrection and after it, by a singular mystery; for all which causes, you are bound to praise and to bless God, Who has given you such and so many benefits, more than to other creatures."

At these and similar words of St. Anthony, the fishes began to open their mouths, and to incline their heads, and by these and other signs of reverence, after the manner they were able, to praise God. Then St. Anthony, seeing such reverence in the fishes towards God their Creator, rejoiced in spirit, and with a loud voice said: "Blessed be the Eternal God, because that the fishes of the waters honor him more than the heretics, and the animals without reason hear His word better than unbelieving men." And the more St. Anthony preached on, the more the multitude of fishes increased, and not one left the place it had taken. At this miracle, the people of the city began to hasten together, amongst whom came the aforesaid heretics, who, seeing a miracle so marvellous and so manifest, had compunction in their hearts, and, with one accord, threw themselves at the feet of St. Anthony, to hear his words.

Then St. Anthony began to preach of the Catholic Faith, and so ably, that all the heretics were converted to the true Faith of Christ; and all the faithful were built up anew, and comforted, and confirmed in the Faith, with the greatest joy. And this done, St. Anthony dismissed the fishes with the blessing of God; and they all departed, with wondrous signs of gladness, as did the people also.